



## Women Ordnance Workers



The demands of supplying a wartime economy during World War II required a massive expansion of the workforce. Women, who had not previously been an important part of the industrial workforce, were employed in war production at many installations, including the Springfield Armory. Although most women did not have experience with industrial jobs, the high degree of mechanization at the Armory allowed them to quickly join the production line. The division of labor ensured a smooth transition as the Armory lost a minimal amount of production time training its new workers. At its wartime peak, 5,210 women (45% of the Armory's work force) helped produce roughly 4.5 million M1 rifles and other equipment that Allied troops desperately needed at the Front.

To foster patriotic spirit and encourage women workers to identify with the war effort, the War Department created the Woman Ordnance Worker (WOW) concept. Distinctive posters, badges, bandanas, and hats instilled in the new workforce a feeling of pride and accomplishment. Besides being fashionable, these colorful bandanas and hats also served a practical function as it kept long hair from becoming entangled in moving machinery. During the war these items gave women a chance to show they were "doing their bit." Today they help us remember the achievements of American women during times of national crisis.